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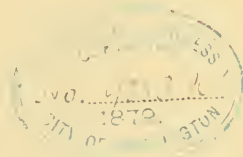
DAYS AT



MOUNT VERNON

DAYS AT MOUNT VERNON.

A Collection of Authentic Incidents
In Modern Times.



BOSTON:
BEACON PRESS, THOMAS TODD, PRINTER,
CORNER BEACON AND SOMERSET STS.
1879.

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The Baptism

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DAYS AT MOUNT VERNON

DO tell us something about modern life at Mount Vernon!" asks many a lady pilgrim of inquiring mind. "Don't all sorts of people come here, and many queer things happen that will never get into history, or even into the newspapers?"

"Enough to fill a volume," might be truthfully answered; for there is a better chance to study human nature now at Mount Vernon than there ever could have been in Washington's time. More people come to honor him dead than came to visit him living. There is more human nature in this country now than there was then — millions more of it.

"I suppose a great many foreigners come here, too?" said some one on a recent occasion; and one of the employés replied :

"Yes, a great many foreigners; we had some Indians here the other day."

What made everybody laugh? Then a boy who had been reading Cooper's novels, and dreaming of nice, clean, romantic Indians, wanted to hear about some of the chiefs when they came to Mount Vernon, how they behaved, etc.



→ VISIT OF RED CLOUD. ←

It was one summer day, many years ago now, that Red Cloud came, with his thirty Sioux braves, all more or less famed for martial exploits. Some of them had scalp-locks attached to their belts. They wore heavy blankets, though the weather was warm, some of them gray, some red, others gaily striped in various colors. They had evidently bedecked themselves, for a festive occasion, with their showiest paint, beads, necklaces and feathers. All carried the fatal tomahawk at their sides. One fellow had an oyster-shell tail several yards long attached to his person, and cast a backward glance at it now and then, with all the conscious pride of a ball-room belle, or a barnyard peacock. Colonel Dodge, an Indian agent, had brought them on this excursion, as a recreation from their business engagements in Washington; so if they failed to get all they wanted from the "Great Chief" and the Secretary of the Interior, they would at least have one pleasant memory to carry home with them.

"Did they have any squaws?" asked the boy.

They had several squaws with them; which was which, we could not tell, but we could distinguish Lady Red Cloud by the marked favoritism he showed her. She sat humbly at his

feet, and when he was eating watermelon, which he enjoyed hugely, he bit off little pieces every now and then, and gravely put them into her mouth — a delicate marital attention on his part, showing a partnership of interests, at least.

A lady present asked one of the chiefs if he had scalped many people. This was rendered to him in his native lingo, by the interpreter. He laid his hand on his tomahawk, and expressively flourished it round the head of her baby, which she had amicably allowed him to take in his arms. The mother screamed. Then the Indian smiled grimly, and said, "Ugh!" He had meant it for a joke, the pleasantest he knew of. But she snatched her baby away from him. Then Colonel Dodge said he wished very much that persons would not speak to them at all about scalps. It was a weak point in the Indian nature, and roused all their worst hereditary passions. Still, on the whole, Red Cloud and his band were fine, stalwart specimens of Red Men, with more moral sentiment than is usually ascribed to the race, outside of Cooper. Each one put his hand through the bars of the tomb, and exclaimed "How!" as he passed by, and who knows but that the spirit of the great departed returned the salute of these, his posthumous children?

When Red Cloud stood before that noble, martial looking portrait, by Trumbull, in the Banquet Hall, so different from all other portraits of Washington, something in it appealed to



The Wedding

his own innate fire. He paused, pointing to it with a gesture full of untaught grace and dramatic meaning.

"Was he the friend of the Red Man?" he asked.

The Superintendent was not at a loss for a reply.

"He was the friend of all mankind."

The Indians received this with manifest respect. They spent most of the time that they were not eating, lying out under the trees, and gazing up at the sky, with those solemn faces of theirs. When they were leaving, they told their interpreter to say that they had enjoyed themselves more at Mount Vernon than at any place since they left their own homes in the West. "It is the only place where we could lie down on the grass under the trees," they said.

→ THE WEDDING. ←

(SEE PLATE.)

A MARRIAGE actually took place at Mount Vernon during the Centennial summer; probably next in order to the historic nuptials of Miss Eleanor Custis, the adopted daughter of Washington, and his nephew, Mr. Lawrence Lewis.

The modern bridal party were from the West somewhere, and came to Washington *en route* from the Centennial. The young lady was traveling with friends of her own, and while at the Exposition met her future husband. Some say they

did not become engaged until they got on the boat at Washington to go to Mount Vernon—a short engagement of two hours! However, this was scarcely more than a surmise, and cannot be stated with authority. At any rate they could have had no idea of being married that day, or they would have procured that necessary adjunct, a license, beforehand. The sentimental influences of Mount Vernon, and a love of personal adventure, must have prompted them to make this August day the most eventful one of their lives.

The party were seen conversing eagerly in squads, whispering, casting furtive glances around at the other visitors, who that day numbered some three hundred. At last one of their number came to the Superintendent, Colonel Hollingsworth, seeing that he was the head man at Mount Vernon, and asked him if there was a minister there. By this time a flutter of curiosity and anticipation had passed through the crowd. They gathered thick and fast, so as not to lose whatever might be about to transpire.

The Colonel, in order to engage the public attention, had to stand on a sofa.

“Is there a minister here?” he called out at the top of his voice, so all the three hundred now congregated in the Banquet Hall, could hear him.

There always is one in crowds, so there came a response to his call.

A prayer-book was then found, and the few and trifling preparations made that are requisite in tying up two people for life. The bride was a fresh, buxom creature. No particulars as to her wedding costume can be given, except that she wore very red roses in her cheeks, and the usual linen duster of the Centennial period, if not actually on her back, was not very far off. She had been charmed, carried away, no doubt, by the wild romance of this hasty marriage, and got through the ceremony without unusual embarrassment. Then somehow the crowd and confusion around them were so great, she found the communication between her and her bridegroom cut off entirely. No telegram of eyes or lips could reach him.

A rough customer, self-invited to the wedding, rushed up, and suiting the action to the word, said :

“Here’s a kiss for Indiana !”

Another, determined to have his share of privileges, cried :

“Here’s one for Ohio !”

A third seized “One for Wisconsin !”

Then the poor girl began to cry. She had not bargained for this rude experience ; it savored less of romance and more of assault. The indignant bridegroom was elbowing his way back to her, threatening to knock down anybody else who touched her. When he resumed his place at her side, he savagely drew on his overcoat, in spite of the August heat,

then drew her arm through his, and marched off with her to the boat, where they waited for it to start. The officiating clergyman had to keep them in sight, being responsible for their license, so they got off in company at Alexandria to procure one. A rumor afterwards got back to Mount Vernon that he did not receive any fee for his services.

➤ THE BAPTISM. ◀

(SEE PLATE.)

THERE was also a baptismal rite performed in the State Banquet Hall of the Mansion, a few years ago. A couple from Washington brought their babe to Mount Vernon, and then decided to have it baptized there. A clergyman was again invoked, and found among the pilgrims. All had taken their positions for the ceremony; the parents stood with the unconscious infant, fondly hoping it would maintain a faultless deportment, and not cry for the next ten minutes. The minister began: "Dearly beloved," etc. It was suddenly perceived that the most important element next to the baby in a baptism, was missing, viz.: water. One of the young men brought a bowl of it in great haste from the lunch table. The minister dipped his fingers in it; it was hot water, and might have scalded the baby, besides being uncanonical.



"What is a Bastille anyhow?"

Finally the child was baptized, and he had name enough to impede his growth, when it was done — “George Washington Parke Custis Theodore Lafayette,” and more still, they said, but this is all that can be recalled.

“Was General Washington in the Union or the Rebel Army?”

THIS question was put by an elderly lady once, and the guide assured her without hesitation :

“In the Rebel army, madam.”

➤ “What is a Bastile, anyhow?” ◀

(SEE PLATE.)

ANOTHER ancient female looked up at the key of the Bastile, in its glass casket, which was presented to Washington by Lafayette after the storming of that fortress.

“What is a Bastile, anyhow,” said she, “and was that the key of the front door? And what was that you was a sayin’ down at the Tomb? I didn’t get there in time. Was it a hundred and thirty years ago that Washington died, or was he born then?” Without waiting for an answer, she con-

cluded: "Well, he's dead, anyhow. Wasn't he a very tall man?"

"About six feet two, m'am."

"Why, I thought he was somethin' extra; I've seen plenty of 'em as tall as that!"

➤ "THE ROOM LAFAYETTE DIED IN." ◀

"Won't you show me the room Lafayette died in?" a lady asked one day.

"Oh, he didn't die here; he died in France!"

"Well, I know *somebody* died here," she responded triumphantly.

The Woman who Contributed a Dollar to Buy Mount Vernon.

(SEE PLATE.)

A WOMAN was seen one day spreading herself over one of the flower beds, with an air of entire appropriation, snipping off flowers with a pair of scissors, as fast as she could snip. One of the guards made a rush for her.

"This is not allowed, madam!"

"I contributed a dollar to buy this place," said she, "and I intend to pull as many flowers as I please!"



"I contributed a dollar to buy this place, and I intend to put as many flowers as I please!"

⇒ THE WASHINGTON OAK. ⇐

"THAT Oak is three or four hundred years old," said the guide one day to the guests, as they were ascending the hill on their way from the boat.

"Did I understand you to say, sir, that General Washington planted that oak?" asked an old man who was bringing up the rear. He took out his penknife, opened the biggest blade, as if he were making ready to lop off a branch. On being informed that he could not be permitted to carry this oak, or any part of it, away with him, he looked resigned, and was afterwards seen with a log of wood from the kitchen woodpile, lugging it down to the boat to preserve it as a souvenir.

NAPOLÉON'S WILLOWS.

"CAN I take a slip from one of them willows Napoleon planted down in that hollow?" asked another gentleman.

"Those willows were shoots from the willows at Napoleon's grave in St. Helena. Yes," said the guide, "you may have a cutting."

➤ REPORT OF WASHINGTON'S PETRIFICATION. ◀

"AND ain't he petrified?" asked a comical old man, as he stood in front of the Tomb. This arose from a totally unfounded rumor, then going the rounds of the newspapers, that the remains having been necessarily opened very recently, had been discovered to be turned to stone, retaining the exact likeness of the original. This originated in the fertile and sensational brain of some reporter, for in 1837, when removed from the old tomb, the remains were forever secured from disturbance by the locking of the inner vault, and the key's being thrown into the Potomac.

➤ RELIC HUNTERS. ◀

A PREMIUM is set on honesty at Mount Vernon. Each visitor is presented with pieces of box, fallen leaves from the magnolia Washington planted, cherrystones descended from the immortal cherry tree he cut down — all this, and yet they are not happy! When several hundred have been there at once, especially in Centennial days when such crowds were a common occurrence, in order to facilitate the rush for pebbles in front of the Tomb, basketfuls and wheelbarrow loads were brought up from the river. Everybody could not be watched,

and in spite of vigilance, some depredations were committed. A daring robbery was perpetrated in Lafayette's room. A woman scaled the lattice doorway, and by a skillful flank movement stole the pillow-shams, never dreamed of, nor on, by Lafayette; put there long after. She secreted them on her person, and then seized the mantel ornaments, snuffers and tray. These were seen and taken from her, but the pillow-shams were never recovered.

Once the keys were stolen out of all the doors. Again, a man climbed out on the roof to get one of the shingles. True, it was the second edition of shingles, to say nothing of the coatings of oil and paint, since the General's day, but he did not care. He said his wife would never forgive him if he did not bring her a part of the house itself.

It might be a nice calculation for the moral philosopher to determine just how much admiration for greatness can exist in the human mind, along with a propensity for petty thievery. They must be there together, for one seems to cause the other.

→ MRS. WASHINGTON'S CAT. ←

ONCE when the guide was telling the story he usually gives in the third-story room Mrs. Washington occupied as a widow, just as he came to the place: "A hole was cut in the door, in order that her favorite cat might crawl in," a gray cat did crawl through just in time to "point the moral and adorn the tale."

"And there's the cat!" said somebody, in good faith.

"Yes, just seventy-eight years old!" added the guide, without even a smile.

A GENTLEMAN from Boston visiting Mount Vernon, told the Superintendent his little daughter at home wanted him to bring her a kitten from there. A lineal descendant of Mrs. Washington's pet cat was bestowed upon him, and he took it away with him. Afterwards this same gentleman, returning, told Colonel Hollingsworth that his daughter had sent the kitten to a cat show in Boston, with this inscription on its collar: "A descendant of the cat at Mount Vernon that used to crawl through the hole in Mrs. Washington's door." The kitten took the prize, as being a fine full-blooded specimen of feline aristocracy.

→WASHINGTON'S UMBRELLA.←

ONE very rainy day a young man employed as guide, borrowed an umbrella from Nathan. (Apropos of Nathan: he is the butler and majordomo at Mount Vernon, and may be found in the lunch-room. He is a descendant of the old colored servants in the Washington family, and is an honest man in principles, a gentleman in manners, which is more than can be said of everybody.) Now for the umbrella. It was very large and holy, and looked as if its claims to antiquity were undeniable. When the guide came back to the house with the visitors on the way from the boat, he hung this umbrella on a nail in the room once used as a sitting-room. Showing various articles to the guests, one of them pointed to it, and said:

"That, I suppose, is Washington's umbrella, just as he left it there!"

→THE BIRD'S NEST OVER THE TOMB.←

THERE has been a bird's nest every year for many seasons directly over the Tomb. This is not always the same nest, for several have been given away, but it always looks very much like the last, and it is thought that the same bird,

become attached to the place, returns and makes a new one every year. Her young brood hop here and there, crying, "pe-wit! pe-wit!" taking their first lessons of life where all life must end, in a sepulcher.

➤ VISIT OF DOM PEDRO. ◀

NEARLY all the famous men and women who come to Washington take the trip down the Potomac to Mount Vernon. Among others came the Emperor of Brazil — not at seven o'clock in the morning, the time he selected for visiting the Corcoran Art Gallery, thereby rousing the Trustees who were to escort him, at an unwonted hour. He had in this instance to wait for the boat, which starts at ten, even with an emperor on board.

He was received at the boat landing by the Superintendent, with due ceremony. The royal gentleman was a tall, gray haired man, of fine bearing and unostentatious manners. He observed everything at Mount Vernon with that close and complimentary attention he bestowed upon everything in the United States. Before leaving, he was requested to plant a young elm. This tree took root and flourished. May our institutions, transplanted to Brazil, flourish as well there! There are no traces left of the



"Oh, don't hurt him, Doctor!"

tree planted many years ago by the Prince of Wales. How could anything planted by the House of Brunswick thrive on soil owned by Washington ?

➤ THE MAN WHO WAS TAKEN ILL ON THE LAWN. ◀

(SEE PLATE.)

IT may be cruel to laugh at a poor man's being ill anywhere, but there are features about this catastrophe, occurring as it did several years since, that still cause a smile at Mount Vernon.

A young man ate freely of cucumbers for lunch, and finished off with ice cream. Some one suggested that the two might prove incompatible, but he said he liked both, and he didn't see why they shouldn't like each other. Not long after he was taken ill ; in fact, his symptoms for a time were alarming. Stretched out on the lawn in front of the Mansion, he was groaning awfully, perfectly reckless as to observation. A young woman with him held his head in her lap ; it did not transpire what relation she bore to the sufferer, but that of sweetheart was suspected. Pat, an Irishman then employed on the place, was sent in search of a doctor among the visitors. One was found walking in the woods with a young lady, also supposed to be *his* sweetheart. He

responded with alacrity, like a true Esculapius, to the call of pain, but his accompanying damsel, not sworn to the service of philanthropy, frowned and objected. "Confound the man!" said she; "I want you to walk with *me*!"

When Pat and the Doctor got to the sick man, the first thing they did was to prepare some toddy and a mustard plaster. Seeing the latter, the young lady, acting as consoler, with his head in her lap, cried out in moving accents:

"Oh, don't hurt him, Doctor!"

Then Pat began to laugh.

The sick man screamed:

"Oh, my mother! I've got the cholera, I'm dying, I must see my mother! She lives over near Arlington; send for her!"

"We've telegraphed for her, sir!" said Pat, but he would keep laughing, so he could hardly hold the brandy still in his hand.

"For shame, Pat, when the man says he is dying!" whispered somebody.

"What gits me, is the way he shouts for his mother!"

Well, the man did not die that time; he probably saw his mother before long, for he was successfully patched up, and carried by six of the workmen down to the boat.

➤ VISIT OF PRESIDENT AND MRS. HAYES. ◀

THIS is the only instance remembered by any one now employed at Mount Vernon of a President's staying there over night. It was in June, 1878, just after the close of the Council. The President and Mrs. Hayes, supposing it to be still in session, came down to see the Vice Regents, and to spend Sunday in this novel manner. The ladies had all left, with the exception of two, and they, with Colonel Hollingsworth, the Superintendent, extended the hospitalities of the Mansion in a becoming manner. The President and his lady seemed desirous of giving as little trouble as possible; they behaved with their usual singular affability and freedom from ostentation. In fact, they wanted to be treated for once just like other people, and appeared to enjoy gathering berries by the roadside as much as anything else. On Sunday morning they all went in the ambulance over to Pohick Church, about six miles from Mount Vernon, a relic of ye olden time, as General and Mrs. Washington often attended there. No fairy godmother could evoke from the past the coach which used to convey them, for the use of this, his successor. It fell into the possession of the Meade family in Virginia, many years ago, and finally became so decrepit with age that it was cut up and sold at fairs in the shape of canes and ornaments. The President and Mrs. Hayes did not complain of the

ambulance, however, nor of the Virginia roads ; they thought everything was delightful, and declared, on leaving, that they never had had such a nice time anywhere as they had at Mount Vernon.

➤ VISIT OF THE CHINESE EMBASSY. ◀

THESE Celestial gentlemen made their first visit to Mount Vernon one fine day in October. There were about twelve of them, attired in native magnificence of flowing robes and carefully plaited pigtails. Their costume in our eyes was peculiar, but their traveling manners might well have been imitated by many of our own countrymen. Their deportment was that of the highest birth and culture. They all wore a kind of cloth petticoat, laced up at the side. This was of one color, and the loose cloth sack was of another. Their shoes were not as well adapted to walking as ours, but they moved along so deftly that they did not look soiled. The minister, his Eminence Chin Lan Pin, is an elderly gentleman of a benevolent and intelligent countenance, and great suavity of manner. His associate minister, Mr. Yung Wing, was the only one of the party who wore the American dress, and was at first supposed to be the interpreter, as he acted in that capacity, speaking choice English. He is an

agreeable and enlightened diplomat, belonging to the Reform party in China. He has been living in America twelve years and more, long enough to decide which of our institutions would be best adapted to his own country. It was discovered that he did not admire the small feet of his countrywomen, and that his own wife was an American lady. He was heard to say that he thought our custom of wearing very high heels, almost in the middle of the shoe, was almost as injurious as that of compressing the feet, as they do in China. The Embassy all noticed the arrangements at Mount Vernon with minute interest, and scrutinized especially the portraits of Mrs. Washington, whether admiringly or otherwise was not known, for they may still have preferred the Chinese standard of female beauty. While going through the greenhouse, Colonel Hollingsworth presented Chin Lan Pin with a fine bouquet. With the instinct of a true gentleman, his Eminence, not wishing, as it were, to monopolize the attentions, offered a flower to some ladies walking behind him. These ladies were afterwards introduced to him with due form. As they all stood ranged in a semicircle on the lawn, bowing low, receiving and returning greetings, the effect reminded one very much of the pictures on Chinese tea-boxes.

"It all looks very old here to us, but how new it must seem to you!" said one of these ladies, and Yung Wing translated into Chinese.

When lunch time came, some of the attendants of the Embassy produced large hampers of provisions, and they took lunch at an outside table all to themselves. They apparently ate sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs, like our own people on a picnic, but the tea they made themselves in Chinese fashion, and drank it out of tiny teacups, without saucers. It was probably such tea as cannot be bought in this country, and might not even be appreciated by our tea-vitiated taste. Then they adjourned to some seats under trees that overlooked the river, and smoked together, probably commenting in unreserved intercourse on what they had seen. Before leaving, they offered thanks with oriental grace for the civilities they had received.

→ THE LAST COUNCIL DAY AT MOUNT VERNON. ←

THE Mount Vernon estate, now owned by the women of America, is governed in their name by a Regent and Vice Regents from the different States. These hold an annual Council, and such as cannot come in person, select proxies from among those who can, to vote and act for them.

This Mount Vernon Council is the only legislative body composed entirely of women, now recognized in the world. Perhaps the workings and success of this, may have some

ultimate effect on the female suffrage movement — who knows?

The Council for 1879 was convened June 11th, and closed on the 13th. The only important change during the year expired was the contract with the new boat, the "W. W. Corcoran," under Captain L. L. Blake. On the closing day, Mr. Corcoran came down to pay his respects to the Council in session, being one of the Advisory Committee, and also to acknowledge the graceful compliment to himself in the naming of the fine new boat. He sat with the ladies in the Council Room, and while there, presented two pieces of a dinner service belonging to Washington, to be placed in the cabinet in the Ohio room, and a valuable old bowl belonging to the Stuart family, for the Maryland room.

A number of guests spent the day at Mount Vernon, returning by the evening boat, which runs only in Council week.

After dinner it was proposed to go and see the live stock, having looked at relics long enough. It is mentioned in Lossing's history that, although Washington had a hundred and one cows, he complained that he had not enough milk and butter for home uses. There are now eleven cows, and milk is sold in abundance on the lunch table. One of these cows is a fine specimen, given by Mrs. Halstead, Vice Regent from New Jersey. It is the daughter of the celebrated "Lady Creamer," an English cow; "beautiful daughter of a

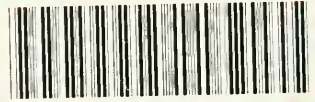
more beautiful mother." Another was presented to Mount Vernon by a district butcher, as a curiosity, her legs being so short as to constitute a deformity. Esau, the colored boy who has charge of her, has a build not unlike the cow, thick set body and short legs.

"Colonel," said he, on first acquaintance with her, "I don't see how I'm a goin' to milk her, without I dig a hole in the ground, and git down in thar, flat o' my back, and then she mought kick me in the eye, or kick the pail over!"

This was true; she was a very inconvenient cow. The rest of the live stock consists of fourteen pigs, one hundred and fifty chickens, fifteen ducks, ten turkeys, five guinea-fowls, one pea-fowl, fifteen cats and kittens, one dozen dogs (three hounds, seven setters and two Scotch terriers). But by another summer the increase in live stock may be very considerable. Mount Vernon does not stand still; it is designed to make a model farm of it, kept by the legislation of the Regency and the vigilance of the Superintendent forever new, yet forever old.



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